

A simple gentle gift

Brenda Lavender 445 words

I have a stalker.

He's been pretty relentless in his pursuit.

Whenever I'm about to make my entrance into a crowded room he's there at the door, waiting for me, blocking my way. If by chance I do manage to pass him, he is then right behind me - breath hot on the back of my neck. His hand falls on my throat like an axe to kindling, cracking my voice, splintering my words into brittle shards. My broken words strewn across the room, lying in wait for me to stumble over them if I foolishly dare to enter further.

He invites people to judge, dismiss, to invalidate me....fear bouncing in my veins, face flushed and a quivering in my gut. Escape is my only hope. There's probably a few of you familiar with this stalker and his spite.

His name is Anxiety.

He's been with me my whole life.

I've been told I just need to learn to breathe, but it's not my breath I need to hold and release - it's myself I need to hold and release from the grasp of my tormentor. He's tortured me through my maidenhood and motherhood, but it is here, now, in my croning, on the threshold of my descent into frailty, that I'm finding my strength. The irony! (Mr Stalker - you're being whipped by an old girl!) I'm rejuvenated and inspired for having found it here!

The words and feelings he forced me to conceal inside for so long have burned deep and long, tempering me into someone steely enough to finally turn and face him. I can now meet his gaze without fear, rage or need for revenge. Reflected in his brute eyes I see a free woman. His power in keeping me small and silent is failing. My

words are mine to weave and create with, they are my ticket to freedom - never were they his.

People might judge my words harshly. Sometimes they are right in those judgements, and sometimes not. Sometimes, perhaps, their judgements are just their own fears made manifest by their personal stalker and projected onto me.

Mr Stalker's been my companion for so long I am easily able to recognise him in others, and I hope they too, will soon find what I have. It wasn't strength, it wasn't courage, nor breath I needed. It was simply by daring to give myself the simplest, gentlest gift that I am defeating my stalker and reclaiming my power. That gift is kindness, to myself. The beautiful thing about that gift is the more I give of it to myself, the more of it I have to give to others.